



Australian Hellenic Council NSW Inc.

A coordinating body for the Australian Hellenic community

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

Wednesday, 28th May 2014

Community Groups Urge Scrapping of Planned Changes to Race Hate Law

Representatives of the Indigenous, Greek, Jewish, Chinese, Arab and Korean communities met on Monday and Tuesday with more than 80 members of the federal parliament from the Coalition, Labor, the Greens and Independents to express their strong opposition to the government's plans to weaken the existing Federal law against racial vilification.

"We were pleasantly surprised by the statements of support we received across the party political divide in favour of leaving the existing law as it is", said George Vellis.

"If anything, the opposition that was expressed to the government's proposals was even stronger than we heard previously, Most of the Coalition MP's we met with expressed disapproval of the government's exposure draft to change the legislation, and voiced deep misgivings about the government's entire approach to this issue."

It is understood that the government received more than 5,300 submissions from the public in response to its exposure draft, almost all of which were strongly critical of it.

"With the exception of any submissions that were made in confidence, all of these submissions should be made available to the public on the Attorney General's website in the interests of having an informed and open debate" George Vellis concluded.

Endorsed by:

Ms Kirstie Parker, Co-chair, National Congress of Australia's First Peoples

Mr Les Malezer, Co-chair, National Congress of Australia's First Peoples

Ms Randa Kattan, CEO, Arab Council Australia

Mr Tony Pang, Secretary, Chinese Australian Services Society

Mr Luke Song, Korean Society of Sydney

Mr Sotiris Tsouris, Cypriot Society of NSW

Mr George Vellis, Co-ordinator, Australian Hellenic Council

Mr Patrick Voon, President, Chinese Australian Forum

Mr Peter Wertheim, Executive Director, Executive Council of Australian Jewry